

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT M 00390 180408Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3134
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0390

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINT PP
SUBJECT: POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES CONTINUE

REF: PORT MORESBY 0346

1. SUMMARY: A WAVE OF RESTIVENESS IS PASSING OVER THE
POLITICAL SCENE RESULTING PRIMARILY FROM LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS
AFFECTING BOTH THE SOMARE MINISTRY AND THE OPPOSITION. END
SUMMARY.

2. THE REVERBERATIONS FROM PRIME MINISTER SOMARE'S CALL
FOR A TOUGH LEADERSHIP CODE (REFTEL) HAVE NOT ENDED, BUT
INDICATIONS ARE GROWING THAT IT MAY CREATE A SERIOUS RIFT
BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER CHAN,
LEADER OF THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESS PARTY. REPORTS ARE
CIRCULATING THAT THE PROPOSED CODE WAS DRAFTED BY FOUR
SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS WHO WERE CONCERNED THAT SOMARE'S
PRESTIGE WAS WANING AS CHAN'S WAS WAXING, AND THEY
WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO PUT SOMARE BACK INTO THE
LIMELIGHT. SOMARE'S PROTRACTED ABSENCES FROM PORT MORESBY
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PAGE 02 PORT M 00390 180408Z

DURING THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS AND HIS PREOCCUPATION, AND
SEEMING LASSITUDE, HAD INDEED CREATED A VACUUM OF
LEADERSHIP INTO WHICH CHAN WAS QUIETLY EDGING.

3. SOMARE IS BEING QUOTED AS SAYING PRIVATELY THAT
"THOSE BLOODY SOCIALISTS" (THE FOUR PUBLIC SERVANTS WHO
DREW UP THE PROPOSAL) WENT MUCH FURTHER THAN HE EVER

INTENDED TO GO IN DRAFTING THE LEADERSHIP CODE, BUT HE IS STRONGLY SUPPORTING IT IN HIS PUBLIC UTTERANCES.

4. CHAN IS BEING VERY CAREFUL IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS BUT IT IS SAID THAT HE BELIEVES THAT THE CODE WAS DIRECTED AGAINST HIM. HE HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE CLARIFICATION ON SEVERAL POINTS. HE SAID HE FEARED THE PROPOSED RESTRICTIONS WOULD REMOVE THE MOST ABLE PEOPLE FROM THE GOVERNMENT. HE SAID A DISTINCTION SHOULD BE MADE BETWEEN ASSETS HELD AT TIME OF ASSUMING OFFICE AND ASSETS ACQUIRED WHILE IN HIGH OFFICE. HE ALSO POINTED OUT OTHER WEAKNESSES OF THE PROPOSAL.

5. THE DETAILS OF PRIME MINISTER'S PROPOSAL HAVE BEEN ATTACKED BY OTHERS AS WELL, AND SOME ARE ADVOCATING A STRONGER OMBUDSMAN COMMISSION INSTEAD. CONSIDERABLE FEELING EXISTS THAT PEOPLE SHOULD NOT HAVE TO DISPOSE OF THEIR BUSINESS INTERESTS IN ORDER TO ACCEPT HIGH OFFICE.

6. THE OPPOSITION IS ALSO HAVING LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS. UNCOMFORTABLE UNDER SIR TEI ABAL'S LEADERSHIP SINCE THE ELECTION, MANY MP'S IN THE OPPOSITION ANTICIPATED A SHIFT AFTER THE THREAT OF A JAIL SENTENCE HUNG OVER SIR TEI'S HEAD AS THE RESULT OF A FATAL AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT. SIR TEI, HOWEVER, WAS ACQUITTED. BUT THE STEAM FOR A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP HAD BEEN BUILT UP, AND LAST WEEK SEVERAL UNITED PARTY MP'S RE-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT M 00390 180408Z

SIGNED FROM THE PARTY. THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, MARTIN TOVADEK, HAS SAID HE IS PREPARED TO RESIGN, SAYING THAT HE SUPPORTS THE BID TO REMOVE SIR TEI AND REORGANIZE THE OPPOSITION.

7. SIR JOHN GUISE, FORMER GOVERNOR GENERAL, HAS APPLIED FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE UNITED PARTY, BUT AS FAR AS WE KNOW HE IS NOT ACTIVELY SEEKING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE OPPOSITION. NEVERTHELESS, HIS NAME IS BEING MENTIONED PUBLICLY AS THE FUTURE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.

8. COMMENT: THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOMARE AND CHAN CAN WORK OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES STILL EXISTS, BUT THE OUTLOOK FOR SIR TEI ABAL REMAINING AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IS DIM. OLMSTED

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